
Community Services Council
 Newfoundland and Labrador

A Maine Volunteer Service Symposium
Together by Design: Lessons from Canada's
Voluntary Sector Initiative


An Experiment in Government-Third Sector
Partnerships: Newfoundland and Labrador's
Strategic Social Plan

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Newfoundland and Labrador

- The island of Newfoundland is located in the gulf of St. Lawrence and the Labrador portion is on the eastern part of the Canadian mainland.
- Newfoundland and Labrador is Canada's most easterly and youngest province having joined the Canadian federation in 1949.



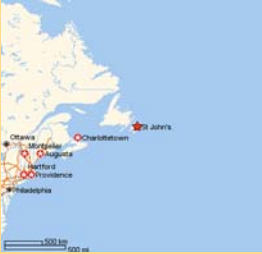
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Geography

- Huge land mass = 405,720 km² - more than three times the total area of the Maritime Provinces
- Newfoundland and Labrador would rank fourth in size behind Alaska, Texas and California...if it were one of the United States of America
- It is almost one and three quarters times the size of Great Britain.




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Population

- According to the 2001 Census, 521,000 people live in the province.
- There are more than 600 communities of various sizes scattered around the province-roughly 300 are incorporated, 175 are local service districts and 150 are unincorporated.



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Economy

- Many rural communities have been historically dependent on resource-based industries such as the fishery. A focus on regional economic development with a goal of greater economic diversity is underway to change this reliance.
- Exports, in particular crude oil & gas, along with mining and forestry and agriculture, are important contributors to economic expansion. While economic growth slowed in 2001, in line with national trends, the economy has expanded by more than 24% in the past five years, mainly due to major capital investment projects, and economic restructuring and diversification.
- The province's output (GDP) per person relative to Canada as a whole has improved in recent years mainly due to economic growth. Real GDP per person for Newfoundland & Labrador represented 74% of the Canadian average in 2001, up from 65% in 1997.

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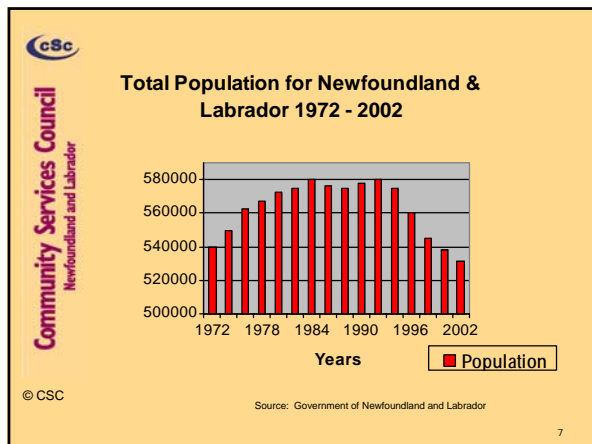

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Demographic Change

- The province's population is declining and aging
- During the past decade, Newfoundland & Labrador has experienced considerable out-migration especially of young people resulting in large part from severe economic shocks resulting from the fisheries crisis, public sector restraint and changes to the unemployment insurance program throughout the 1990s.
- There has also been a drop in births since the mid-1960s,
- These losses peaked during 1997-98, but in recent years these numbers have been reduced due to an improved economy and labor markets.
- While economic improvements have caused out-migration to diminish, moderate net losses are expected to continue.

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The Strategic Social Plan A Policy Framework

1998, the provincial Government released *People, Partners and Prosperity: A Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland & Labrador* (SSP), a framework for social policy renewal. It was:

- A deliberate public policy instrument
- An experiment in collaborative governance
- A long term change strategy

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The Origins of the Strategic Social Plan as a Model for Collaborative Government in Newfoundland and Labrador

- The SSP was the product of a confluence of specific social, economic, and political factors during the 1980s and '90s
- VCBOs increasingly self-aware and active in 1970s and '80s
- Influence of concepts such as population health, community development, prevention and early intervention, integrated policies and programs, client-centred approach to service, etc.

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CSC Leadership Role

- In 1987, the Community Services Council urged government through briefings to Cabinet to set up a "Social Planning/Social Policy Advisory Council ... to develop a long term strategic plan within the social policy sector."
- Other prominent VCBOs advocated reforms, lending their voices to the call for change.

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The Development of the SSP, 1993-1998

- Government's intention to develop a strategic social plan announced in 1993.
- Strategic planning group appointed to develop a consultation paper.
- Release of consultation paper delayed by provincial election in 1996.
- Liberals re-elected. Consultation paper revised and released in fall of 1996.
- Social Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC) chaired by CSC's CEO, conducts public dialogue and releases reports in March 1997.
- Interdepartmental and ministerial committees created to draft SSP.
- *People, Partners and Prosperity: A Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* is released in 1998.

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External Factors (national and international)

- Public demands for more meaningful input into the policymaking process
- Pressure from the voluntary sector for recognition
- Growing recognition of the voluntary sector's role in society
- Emerging research showing the breadth and magnitude of the sector.
- New Public Management
 - Collaborative governance
- Popular concepts like community development and population health model

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Internal Factors (provincial)

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- Cod moratorium in 1992
- Changing demographics, 1990s
- Economic recession, early 1990s
- Changes to federal funding and social programs, 1980s and '90s
- Advocacy of voluntary sector organizations like the Community Services Council (CSC)
- Economic Recovery Commission and the Strategic Economic Plan (1992)
- Change in Leadership – the Liberal party gets a new leader who was very interested in “optics”

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The Strategic Social Plan

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- The SSP is a government document and not a negotiated agreement signed between the government and voluntary sector.
- The role of the voluntary, community-based sector and the sector's relationship with government are aspects of a much broader plan for social policy renewal.
- Voluntary, community-based organizations VCB's are central to the development of the SSP.

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Themes

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- Integrating social and economic development
- Building on community and regional strengths
- Investing in people
- Policy shifts:
 - Prevention and early intervention
 - Place based development
 - Evidenced-based decisions
 - Consistency between policy and delivery
 - Public accountability / social audit

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Voluntary Community-Based Sector Involvement in SSP Implementation

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Key research issues:

SSP Committee approach to involving

- the voluntary sector
- citizens

- Perspective of voluntary organizations about their involvement with the SSP Committee
- Potential models for voluntary sector involvement
- Leadership Teams as mechanism for citizen engagement

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A Focus on the Strategic Social Plan of Newfoundland and Labrador

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- In 1998, the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador published *People, Partners and Prosperity: A Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland & Labrador*.
- This framework, in addition to highlighting the essential links between social and economic development, presented new policy proposals for investing in people and building on community and regional strengths.
- The ongoing implementation of the SSP creates an unprecedented opportunity for innovative research and to explore the impacts of such a deliberate government policy instrument.

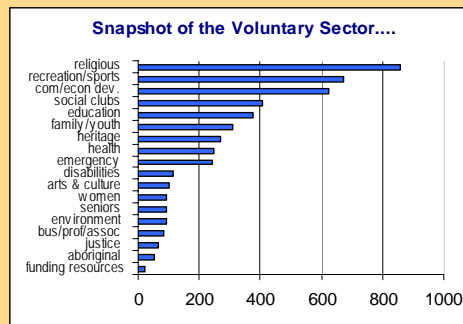
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Snapshot of the Voluntary Sector....

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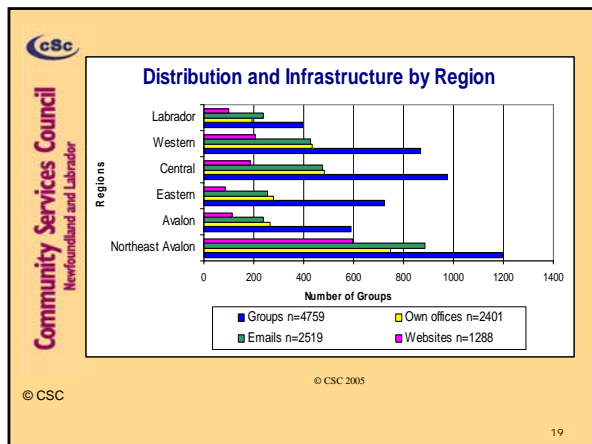
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Number of Groups ~ 4759

2220 registered groups
(1226 Registered Charities)

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SSP Committee Approach to Involving Voluntary Sector

- Minor attempts at inclusion of sector
 - 1-2 organizations involved on SSP Committee
 - Few more involved indirectly on sub-committees
 - Passive/ indirect involvement at events
- Role of SSP Committee/Planner characterized as service-provider not partner
 - community groups viewed as clients

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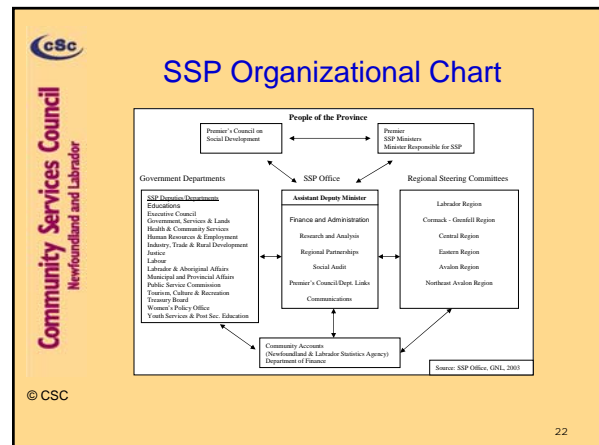
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Components of SSP

- Central agency, SSP Unit in Executive Council
- Dedicated staff resources
- Demonstration projects in year one
- Regional committees
- Premier's Council
- Joint committee with voluntary sector
- Ministerial and deputies committee

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SSP Committee and VCBS Researchers' Preliminary Conclusions

- Citizen leaders bring different perspectives than voluntary organizations
 - Citizens represent their own experiences overall
 - Community organizations represent population group or issue
- Strategies to engage community-based organizations are different than those used to engage citizens
- SSP Committee may not have known how nor understood the amount of effort required to effectively involve the sector

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Voluntary, Community-Based Sector Researchers' Preliminary Conclusions

- Most organizations had no real involvement
 - Those involved mainly indirect
- Little attempt made by groups to organize to have direct input as a collective in regions
 - Lack of resources to do so
 - Not all groups saw need to have involvement
- Network approaches focused on what they needed and wanted (ie what they could receive from process)
 - rather than on input that could be provided

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A Model for Voluntary Sector Involvement: Researchers' Preliminary Conclusions

- Coordinating mechanism needed for sector
 - coordinated representation on SSP Committee
- Mechanism requires permanent staff and long-term funding
- Mechanism should play dual role
 - input to SSP Committee
 - support for sector
- Groups thought more about services/supports needed by the sector
 - rather than role in regional planning and decision-making

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Comments

- Social audit – a weak process
- Phased out before process had time to fully mature
- Not sufficiently embedded in voluntary sector and community groups.
- Voluntary sector had no well funded mechanism for interacting or to lobby for retention
- Shows vulnerability of frameworks and processes to partisan whims and change in governments when not enshrined

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Deconstruction of the SSP

- New government 2003
- Statement of support for principles of SSP
- Disbanding Premier's Council
- End of joint committee with sector
- Loss of connection of institutions and key groups in regions

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New structures under development

- Morphing into rural secretariat
 - Places emphasis on rural areas
- No formal links with voluntary organizations
- Nine Committees of volunteer leaders
- Provincial Council
- Refocus on economic issues
- Public call for nominations of individuals
- Identified weakness of SSP may not be addressed

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